

NY Times exposes Israel's r*pe dungeons, Netanyahu threatens to sue

The Grayzone's Max Blumenthal joins former US representative and One America News host Matt Gaetz to discuss the New York Times article reporting what was already well known to close observers of Israel-Palestine: Israel has adopted sexual abuse on a systematic level to torture Palestinians kidnapped from Gaza since Oct 7, and much of its society has mobilized in defense of the torturers. Max explains why Netanyahu's extreme legal threats against the NY Times will never lead to concrete action, and how they could blow back on Israel if they went to trial. ||| The Grayzone ||| Find more reporting at <https://thegrayzone.com> Support our original journalism at Patreon: <https://patreon.com/grayzone> Facebook: <https://facebook.com/thegrayzone> Twitter: <https://twitter.com/thegrayzonenews> Instagram: <https://instagram.com/thegrayzonenews> Minds: <https://minds.com/thegrayzone> Mastodon: <https://mastodon.social/@thegrayzone> #TheGrayzone

#Matt Gaetz

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is issuing fresh threats against The New York Times, indicating that he's going to sue the paper on behalf of the government of Israel as a consequence of reports of terrible sexual torture and rape of Palestinians who are in the custody of Israelis. We want to get right to these allegations, what they mean, and what exposure of these acts might do to the very fragile situation in the Middle East. Joining us now is the editor of The Grayzone, Max Blumenthal. Max, bring us inside this threat from Prime Minister Netanyahu to sue The New York Times.

#Max

Very characteristic of Benjamin Netanyahu, but also extremely dangerous for Israel. Benjamin Netanyahu has said that he's directed his legal advisers to consider harsh legal action against The New York Times' Nick Kristof, an opinion writer from the opinion section, who has published a meticulously documented report on something that all of us who have paid attention and who have reported from the occupied territories and visited Israel's prisons in the occupied territories and attended, as I have, its children's courts, for example, know that Israel does in these facilities, which is it practices torture.

And since October 7th, as Israel has kidnapped thousands of civilians, mostly males, from the Gaza Strip, essentially holding them as hostages in new dungeon-like facilities like Sde Teiman in the Negev Desert, practicing sexual abuse through a force which has been given total free hand over Palestinian prisoners, they believed they were all Hamas militants who were carrying out horrific attacks on October 7th. Some of them turned out to be doctors, like Dr. Adnan al-Bursh, who was

reportedly raped to death by Israeli soldiers at one of these facilities. And, you know, one of the reasons we know this really was happening was not just reports like the New York Times report from 2024 by Patrick Kingsley on the Sde Teiman facility, which reported that Israeli soldiers were using batons and electric shocks in the rectums of Palestinian detainees, a form of rape, and killing several of them.

We know it because it was videotaped. And anyone watching this right now can see the video of Israeli soldiers at Sde Teiman anally raping a Palestinian detainee with a baton. Those soldiers are well known to the Israeli public. One of them has become sort of a national folk hero. His name is Meir Shetrit. And they were going to be put on trial, and then there were riots by Israeli army reservists invading Israeli army bases and the court where they were to be put on trial. All of these men were exonerated and sent back to their positions because of the massive public support they've received. So Nicholas Kristof reports all of what we already know, with 14 firsthand reports from survivors of sexual assault in these prisons.

And now Benjamin Netanyahu is threatening to sue in order to push back on this PR catastrophe. The problem for Netanyahu is he's someone who would be libel-proof because his reputation is so low. Given his ICC warrant, given that multiple human rights groups and governments have accused him of genocide in the Gaza Strip, given his boasting to, for example, the U.S. ambassador to Israel, Mike Huckabee, of having an assassination list, he is essentially libel-proof in U.S. courts. Israel would lose its own sovereign immunity. And it would be amazing to see The New York Times get discovery if this went to trial and bring out all of the sexual torture that Israel's been practicing in its prisons.

#Matt Gaetz

Yeah, Max, I really was surprised when I saw this because, of course, Israel says these things didn't happen. They've called it blood libel, the worst thing said about the country. And if they had evidence that this stuff wasn't happening, wouldn't they want to move past this? Why would they make a threat to sue over something that could draw more attention to allegations of such terrible misconduct?

#Max

Yeah, well, I think it's another characteristic and very unstrategic overreaction. Another avenue they could take would be to say, we are going to investigate this, allow us to investigate ourselves. We do not practice torture. We consider it an abhorrent practice, and we want to abide by international law just for purely PR purposes. But I think that the Israelis and their cutouts in the United States and their supporters are so stuck in their own echo chamber that either they don't believe this is true, or they don't want to sell out Netanyahu's own base in Israel, which actually supports these kinds of practices.

I mentioned that Meir Shetrit, who was accused by Israel's top JAG lawyer, the military prosecutor, of raping a Palestinian detainee, has become a national folk hero. He was brought on the pro-Netanyahu network Channel 14 as a guest. These other soldiers have boasted on camera of using dogs as an instrument of sexual torture. For Netanyahu to say "we condemn this" would be condemning a part of his own base and a part of the military that feels vulnerable to these charges. And this really highlights the danger of Israel in international law, which is that it aims to destroy it.

#Matt Gaetz

I wonder if the people in Israel can have their own conscience shocked by this. If what we want is peace between the Israelis and the Palestinians, which is certainly what I want, it's very difficult to change hearts and minds through an electrified anus. And so, what is the sensibility within Israel for these types of reports and these types of behaviors?

#Max

Well, you know, after 1948, the Israelis put over one million Palestinian refugees who had been kicked off their land into a narrow strip of land called the Gaza Strip. And by 2005, they had placed the Gaza Strip under siege, out of sight, out of mind, and pretended that those people were not occupied and that nothing bad would come of this. October 7th, 2023 arrives in a major guerrilla assault, mostly on Israeli military bases, but also many civilians were killed and over 200 were taken hostage because this was the only diplomatic leverage that Hamas had. The majority of Jewish Israelis, over 90 percent, wanted revenge for this. And the revenge has taken the form—yeah, sexual torture, genocide. A Time magazine poll showed in 2024 that the number of Israelis who believed that Israel was using too much firepower as it was on its way to killing 20,000 children in the Gaza Strip, that that number was in the single digits. I think it was about five percent. So there really is no restraint there.

#Matt Gaetz

Wow. Yeah, it doesn't look like the populace is going to be a limiting factor on some of these heinous acts, if they are indeed occurring. And we may get litigation and discovery to be able to get to the truth of that matter. Max Blumenthal, editor at The Grayzone, thanks so much for joining us as always. Thanks a lot, Aaron.